

STATES SCRAMBLE TO ADDRESS STEM CELL VOID

Embryonic stem cell research in the United States has an urgent need for federal oversight and support. The burgeoning field requires rigorous standards and uniform regulations in order to ensure that the highest ethical and scientific criteria are met. Otherwise, embryonic stem cell research will be conducted mostly outside the public arena, removed from sufficient guidance and supervision.

In the absence of an expanded federal policy, states are taking matters into their own hands, introducing—and in some cases enacting—legislation to address the issue. There already is a patchwork of state laws regulating embryonic stem cell research and somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT), varying widely in application and content. Such inconsistencies increase the potential for duplicative (and thus wasteful) research and make it harder for scientists to collaborate in studies.

A GROWING NUMBER OF STATES HAVE ENACTED OR ARE CONSIDERING LEGISLATION ENCOURAGING AND FUNDING EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH,¹ INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

- **CALIFORNIA:** In November 2004, voters approved a bond initiative that will commit **\$3 BILLION** to stem cell research over the next 10 years. This amount is many times the current rate of federal support.
- **NEW YORK:** Legislative leaders have has proposed a **\$ 1 BILLION** stem cell research initiative financed through the sale of government bonds.
- **NEW JERSEY:** In early 2005, acting Governor Richard Codey will introduce a **\$500 MILLION** bond proposal to fund embryonic stem cell research over the next 10 years. Codey also has proposed that New Jersey, Delaware and Pennsylvania work together to keep their region competitive on the issue. In 2004, New Jersey created the first state-funded embryonic stem cell research center, a **\$25 MILLION** endeavor.
- **ILLINOIS:** State comptroller Dan Hynes has proposed creating a state-funded institute to award **\$1 BILLION** in stem cell research grants over 10 years.²
- **WISCONSIN:** Governor Jim Doyle has announced plans to invest nearly **\$750 MILLION** to support human embryonic stem cell research and other medical research.³
- **MARYLAND:** State legislators are prepared to introduce legislation to fund stem cell research at **\$25 MILLION** per year.⁴
- **TEXAS:** U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison has called on state lawmakers and Gov. Rick Perry, a fellow Republican, to help develop a favorable stem cell research environment so Texas does not lose top scientists to California or other states.⁵
- **CONNECTICUT:** Legislators have reintroduced a bill that would appropriate **\$10 MILLION** per year over two years for a stem cell research fund. The bill also would ban reproductive cloning.
- **MASSACHUSETTS:** Legislative leaders are pushing for passage of a comprehensive stem cell research bill that may provide tax incentives for companies that do the research.

¹ Congressional Research Report for Congress, *Stem Cell Research*, p. CRS-14 Citing National Council of State Legislators (<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/genetics/embfet.htm#b>)

² Wall Street Journal, December 24, 2004, p. A4.

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ USA Today, December 17, 2004.